eBook

5 ELEARNING TRENDS THAT ARE DOMINATING 2016

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INTRODUCTION

Education has always been limited by technology. Only until recently, both teacher and pupil needed to be in the same lecture hall to learn. In fact, it was not until the invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg in 1439 that written record became accessible to everyday people. That innovation set in motion an explosion of literature and scientific discovery.

Today, the information superhighway can fit in your pocket, and internet access is a basic human right (according to the United Nations). There are a plethora of online learning options for practically every subject imaginable. Wikipedia, YouTube, and WebMD are examples of highly popular learning platforms offering meticulously explained subject matter open-source. These platforms, among other services, allow masses of people to be educated on a personalized schedule for the first time, with very little variable cost.

Not a lot is certain about the future these days, but what is sure is the continued rise of eLearning. With the already crowded market for eLearning services expanding every few months, meaningful innovations and strategies will surely take new ground in the coming year. Here, we will investigate these top eLearning trends for 2016.

CHAPTER 1: MOOCS ARE THE WAVE OF THE FUTURE

These days, technology plays a bigger role in higher education than ever before: professors post lecture materials online, students interact with instructors via email, and submitting assignments online. With the physical barriers to collegiate-level learning disappearing, institutions of higher education are forced to adapt. Heavyweight Universities like MIT and Harvard now offer materials open-source via massive online open courses (MOOCs). Practically unlimited numbers of curious individuals can access course materials without ever stepping foot on campus.

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Many MOOCs are free, so they have to find inventive ways to make money. However, if the financial model is set up correctly, MOOCs will eventually turn a profit if the content can be used for multiple years afterwards. For the MOOCs that are not free – and there are some that can even take hundreds of thousands of dollars to produce -- costs can be recouped assuming these courses are used by tens of thousands of students.

Providers of MOOC's can market these courses to as many people as possible because they don't suffer from the same constraints as traditional course offerings -- like lecture hall capacity. With no capacity limit for how many students a provider can accept, all students have access to the best courses.

This open-source style of education raises some concerns because:

1. Because students will naturally select the MOOCs with the best teachers, the unfortunate consequence will be that the top one or two professors receive nearly all of the students. With class sizes potentially in the hundreds of thousands, quality instructors will be paid handsomely. However, for the instructors who aren't top-notch, they'll unfortunately see their salaries free-fall.
2. While on-campus students must pay high tuitions to receive a degree, MOOCs allow students to receive instruction at either no cost or a low cost. Because of this, registrations and dropout rates are inflated, since students bear little risk by registering. Sometimes

MOOCs even have a 95% drop out rate.

With 1.5 billion potential students worldwide unable to afford a traditional college education, MOOC providers are struggling to meet massive demand. Major providers like Coursera, Udacity and edX are expected to post big gains in 2016. Like it or not, the traditional way of educating our planet is about to be hugely disrupted.

Like it or not, MOOCs are about to hugely disrupt the traditional way of educating our planet. Click to Tweet.

CHAPTER 2: GAMIFICATION AS AN ENGAGING PROBLEM-SOLVING TOOL

Every business leader wants to make smarter decisions; and if you're trying to use advanced analytics to influence these choices, you're not alone. The rise of big data capabilities gives executives in every industry new insights on the future. According to a recent survey by Gartner, 73% of businesses have invested or plan to invest in big data in the next 24 months.

Now that these tools exist, executives face a new challenge: encouraging employees to make the most of them. These products are often fairly complex, so they may have steep learning curves. Your investment in the most effective business tools amount to little without a trained workforce behind them.

How can we inspire employees to increase productivity in completing the menial tasks? Decision makers in recent years have found the solution in gamification, a trend that we expect to continue in 2016.

The concept is not necessarily a new one. To quote Mary Poppins, "In every job that must be done, there is an element of fun, you find the fun and snap! The job's a game." Gamification employs the same motivational concepts - the application of game design principles in non-gaming contexts to achieve a desired end. Video gamers spend long hours trying to improve themselves without any outside encouragement. Social factors of game design also contribute to the success of gamification; gamers love to compare their scores to their peers.

Gamification in eLearning employs the motivational concepts of game design principles in non-gaming contexts to achieve a desired end. **Click to Tweet.**

Author Jane McGonigal makes a strong case for leveraging gamification to solve the big social challenges of our time in Reality is Broken . McGonigal suggests that the four defining traits of any game — a goal, clear rules, a feedback system, and voluntary participation — can be applied to any challenge. This passionate piece seeks to prove that "the future will belong to those who can understand, design, and play games."

So how have the motivational concepts of gamification improved analytical collaboration amongst decision makers? It's still too early

to tell, but there are a few positive examples.

Bluewolf, a global consulting firm, uses gamification internally to engage its employees and enhance their brand by “gamifying social collaboration”. Bluewolf called its initiative the #GoingSocial program, employing a variety of tools, including employees called ‘Pack Profiles,’ and rewarding internal and external collaboration with a point system. For example, employees that enhance Bluewolf’s image by publishing a post on the company blog will garner points based on the number of hits it gets. The result is an incentivized system that strengthens social brands that has an impact within and outside the company.

Other examples of successful gamification include Khan Academy, a free micro lecture platform that offers practice exercises and educator tools to spread great education worldwide. Users are incentivized to keep learning by awarding badges and “energy points” as the user completes videos and practice problems. Studying topics like linear algebra or financial accounting can be tedious, but with a gamified system, Khan Academy makes it easier to keep going.

Gamification holds a lot of potential, but only time will tell how much. Will we see new customer engagement models and decision support tools featuring a gamification format in 2016?

CHAPTER 3: PERSONALIZED SYSTEMS- AI SYSTEMS & ONLINE GUIDANCE SYSTEMS

E-learning systems are beginning to use AI methods for intelligently communicating with users. E-learning systems contain intelligent methods for "analysis, evaluation and assessment of the user's knowledge and skills as well as elearning process control, supervision and optimization." -- International Journal of Computer Science and Information Technology Research.

AI has come to eLearning. Virtual coaches are becoming the new teachers. Northeastern University developed a form of virtual coaching technology where a group of learners were assigned an AI virtual coach to help them lose weight. The AI virtual coach helped the learners build a weight loss plan and provided personalized feedback on their progress. The group with the couch had much better result than those without the coach.

Advances in AI technology have also lead to the automation of customer service responsibilities traditionally performed by human representatives. Online Guidance platforms like WalkMe allows developers to create widgets that can help walk users through websites, like a GPS on a tricky road. The market for robust CRM services like this is real, and will only continue to grow.

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Eran Wagner, a General Partner at Gemini Israel Ventures, said in a statement. "WalkMe is a disruptive system that can fundamentally change the way online services engage with their users online. WalkMe's ability to increase visitor clarity, satisfaction and conversion while dramatically reducing help-desk costs, makes it a no-brainer for a business of any size," The value proposition of eliminating customer service labor expenses is high, and as AI capabilities improve, more services like WalkMe are surely on their way.

CHAPTER 4: THE EXPERIENCE API (XAPI) AS THE NEW INFRASTRUCTURE

Innovations in technology have had a profound effect on the way we learn. The act of learning has expanded beyond specific times and places. Instead, learning is a perpetual and self-motivated series of interactions and experiences. This dedicated daily learning behooves business leaders. As Warren Buffett teaches in his animated series Secret Millionaires Club, "The more you learn, the more you'll earn." However, the perpetual digestion of information raises a concern; how can we keep track of what we have learned?

Enter Experience API.

Sometimes known as the Tin Can API or xAPI, Experience API is an open-soure e-learning software specification that collects data on learning content and learning systems. Because people use multiple learning systems, rather than one defined technology or tool, xAPI let us collect meaningful data from these different learning systems and share them to arrive at greater insights.

So how does it work?

People learn in all kinds of ways, and xAPI is robust enough to handle variety like this. When an interaction triggers a learning experience, the application records a simple statement following the form of "noun, verb, object." If you find yourself reading an article on CRM management, you can record a statement saying: "I read about CRM management", and is recorded in a Learning Record Store.

Experience API is generally considered to be the successor of SCORM (Sharable Content Object Reference Model), which was the standard for packaging e-learning data and sending it to a Learning Management System. This new system improves on SCORM by supporting cross-platform functionality, real-world performance tracking, and Oauth security standard.

So how has Experience API been received since its introduction by Advanced Distribution Learning in April 2013? Adobe used this software specification to build Captivate, an application that allows users to "create any kind of eLearning end-to-end. For any device." This software specification has also provided the infrastructure to support a multitude of startup companies. As the demand for robust, flexible e-learning solutions grows, so too will the demand for products built on an experience API framework. Highly customizable tools allow developers and educators the freedom to create better educational tools. Expect to see a lot more of Experience API in 2016.

CHAPTER 5: MLEARNING – MOBILE

The word “mobile” has become a veritable buzzword in the world of business, affecting practically every industry. Indeed, having applications and services that can work cross-platform is pretty much a requirement for any business, so the rise of mobile technology in e-learning comes as no surprise. With analysts anticipating continued growth of mobile devices for the foreseeable future, businesses are bullish on mLearning. Some argue that it will come to dominate the industry.

By using mLearning technologies, users combine the power of educational technology with the flexibility of mobile devices. This allows mLearning to leverage micro-location technologies like QR codes, GPS and others. Universal accessibility to educational materials also has several positive side effects, including dramatic increases in exam scores, as well as decreases in dropout rates in technical fields. mLearning also offers a promising use for augmented reality in education.

By using mLearning technologies, users combine the power of educational technology with the flexibility of mobile devices.
Click to Tweet.

One of the best uses for m-Learning products has been as a supplement for existing classes. Mobile capabilities in the classroom can enhance group collaboration, and interactions with instructors and teaching

assistants in universities. They can replace paper textbooks, and other conventional learning aids, and virtualize them to one place.

mLearning is also changing the landscape of language education. Mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) is simply a method of language education that is assisted via a mobile device. Imagine being able to understand expressions in a foreign language as you walk down the street. It's a strategy that is already been implemented at schools like Stanford University, University of Wisconsin, and Duke University in the last decade.

In the professional world, mLearning can be applied to training employees on new material. Although teams of employees attend face-to-face training, they learn best by doing the job hands-on. Since this training is often needed immediately, workers can access training materials on mobile devices, access performance support, and check reference guides and lists. This self-service training strategy allows employees to easily reach information when time efficiency is critical. One of the most sophisticated tools in the self-service world is online guidance, a tool that is overlaid onto a website and takes the user step-by-step through a variety of common work processes.

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For all its strengths, mLearning has some challenges. Technical challenges like poor network connectivity, weak battery life, planned obsolescence, and bandwidth constraints prevent mLearning products and services from reaching many users. Barriers to entry for users also include content pirating, security of user information, and the cost/accessibility hurdles of the digital divide.

The rise of mLearning has shown us that education really can happen anywhere. As the market for mobile devices continues to grow, expect to see more from this e-Learning trend in 2016.

CONCLUSION

The five eLearning trends presented here are the hottest trends taking the eLearning industry by storm. These trends are being further pushed forward by Millennials, the tech-savvy generation that carry smartphones with them everywhere they are. Those that respond with intelligent solutions will certainly reap the rewards.

ABOUT WALKME

WalkMe provides a cloud-based platform for businesses to guide and engage employees through any online experience, accelerating time-to-competence, and helping employees successfully apply what they learn on any website or software.

As they work, employees receive immediate, onscreen step-by-step guidance in the moment of need, helping them successfully perform their most important tasks, no matter how complex. With WalkMe, employees no longer need to focus on the technical aspects of operating software, freeing them to be more productive and avoid mistakes. WalkMe improves training effectiveness and ensures a lasting impact on employee productivity, while reducing training costs.

WalkMe's Just-in-Time Contextual Guidance and Performance Support platform can simplify software and reduce training times and costs; accelerate adoption and increase user productivity; ensure proper usage and eliminate user confusion and errors by delivering knowledge at the moment of need; and streamline change management, helping your employees adapt to changes in their workflow or when migrating from other software.